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Sermon Notes

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Saving Faith, Part 2

Romans 10:9-10

Introduction

- The Content of Saving Faith: The Mental Aspect
- The Character of Saving Faith: The Heart Aspect
- The Confirmation of Saving Faith: The Life Aspect

I. The Content of Saving Faith

A. Faith Must Have a Content

1. Faith Alone is Not Enough... fanatical Muslims and astounding Buddhist monks outstrip us... it is FAITH IN CHRIST that saves
2. There is Absolute Truth: Post-Modern, relativistic views of truth are false
3. Truth Precedes Experience: lots of people can have amazing spiritual experiences... but what is the truth??

Christianity is based on certain facts, and if those facts are not true, Christianity falls

1 Corinthians 15:17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

B. Content Clearly Stated

Romans 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Christian faith focuses on the Person of Jesus of Nazareth

C. The Doctrine of the Incarnation and Full Deity of Christ

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord"

1. Start with the doctrine of the Incarnation
2. "Jesus is Lord" the central article of confession of the Christian religion...
Jesus is God in the Flesh
3. Jesus is Lord = statement of absolute sovereignty... Jesus rules over all things

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

4. Our Personal Lord... Thomas's confession: "My Lord and My God!!"

D. The Doctrine of the Bodily Resurrection of Christ

E. Evangelism Essential: You Cannot Call on Someone You Don't Know

BUT... saving faith involves MORE than merely assenting that these spiritual facts are true

The devil and his angels know the truth of more Christian doctrine than any of the church's greatest theologians

They know that Jesus is Lord, they know that He died on the cross for sins, they know that He rose from the dead on the third day, they know that He has all authority in heaven and on earth

They know all these things with absolute certainty... and they HATE Christ and are totally opposed to Him

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.

Saving faith is a matter of the HEART... it is a HEART FAITH

II. The Character of Saving Faith

A. Saving Faith Comes from the Heart

Romans 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

1. "Head knowledge" does not save
2. Mere intellectual assent is not what Paul is comparing to "the righteousness that is by law"

Illus. Often I have shared the evidence that Christ rose from the dead with lost people; I have given the various options for what happened to the body of Christ: 1) His disciples stole it; 2) Jesus wasn't really dead but merely swooned and revived; 3) They lost the tomb; etc. At the end of a careful presentation, I ask, "What do you think happened to Christ's body?" They shrug and flatly say "I guess He rose from the dead." But that answer, that mere intellectual assent does not save

3. The faith that saves is a matter of the heart... and it is the avenue that transforms the heart
4. Saving faith is a matter of the heart... it is deep, rooted in every area of the person's being
5. It is no sham, no mask, no costume... it is genuine and pervasive
6. It is rooted in LOVE

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Saving faith results in a deep and pervasive attraction to Christ... a yearning to see His glory, to be with Him eternally; a yearning to know more and more about Him, to please Him in every way; a hunger and thirst to be like Him and to see Him as He is

It is also a pervasive desire for integrity... that every internal and external aspect of life be conformed to this one love

B. The Heart's Natural Condition

1. Dead in transgressions and sins
2. Loving wickedness, hating righteousness
3. Suppressing the truth in unrighteousness
4. Barriers to coming to saving faith in Christ

Mark McCloskey, *Tell It Often, Tell It Well*

The unbeliever has immense barriers to coming to faith... apart from the direct work of God by the Holy Spirit, these barriers are insurmountable

- Spiritual blindness
- Bad experiences with Christians and with church
- Misconceptions of the nature of the gospel and the character of God
- Commitment to an immoral lifestyle

- Intellectual dishonesty
- Fear: fear of the future, fear of God, fear of man

All of these things and more keep your neighbors, coworkers, family, friends and fellow citizens from coming to Christ for forgiveness

For people in other cultures, on the mission field, there are even more barriers and obstacles

- False religions
- Cultural barriers
- Language barriers
- Ignorance

C. The Heart's Supernatural Transformation

1. The radical transformation these verses describe can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit
2. The sinful human heart does not have power over itself, over its inclinations, loves, hatreds, and convictions
3. Still less can a human heart suddenly believe that Christ is God, that He died for their own personal sins, that He rose from the dead on the third day, that full forgiveness of sins is available for any who simply trust in Christ
4. So Paul told us a stunning fact: The gospel is essentially simple, but no one can do that simple thing apart from the work of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I tell you that ... no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Obviously this does not mean no one can say the words "Jesus is Lord"... if you wrote this on a piece of paper and handed it to someone to read, and they read it aloud, they would no more be converted than if they read the morning newspaper

The issue is: no one can say "Jesus is Lord" FROM THE HEART unless the Holy Spirit of God works it in them

This is what it means to be born again, to have a new heart

5. A New Heart

Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

The first thing that new heart does is see the glory of God in the face of Christ

The second thing that new heart does is trust in Christ for personal salvation of sins

6. Genuineness, honesty, truly turning, truly trusting... FROM THE HEART

Joel 2:12-13 'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' ¹³ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

“Rend your heart not your garments” = let your turning to me be genuine, to the core of your being

People can put on masks, they can deceive, they can act, they can

D. Christ: The Treasure of Your Heart

Matthew 13:44-46 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. ⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Heart faith means that Christ has become the priceless treasure of your heart

Paul describes this in Philippians 3:

Philippians 3:7-11 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

1. Demons will always know more Christian doctrine than we do
2. They will believe that it's true that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead
3. However, they hate Him and fight against Him
4. Saving faith is a heart faith, from the core of your being: loving Christ, cherishing Him, longing for Him to show Himself to you, yearning to be in His presence, longing to please Him

5. Saving faith is no sham, no outward show... it is a fire God ignites inside you for the glory of Christ... Christ has become the priceless treasure of your soul

Illus. When George Beverly Shea was 23, he faced a decision: should he accept a high-paying and well-respected position as a secular singer in New York City? Or should he continue to sing in churches and for Christian radio programs? As he was sitting at the piano preparing for the upcoming Sunday service, he found a poem by Mr. Rhea F. Miller. He composed music for the poem and used that song for the service. It was also the beginning of sharing this song and many others with audiences around the world. The words of this song helped to determine his decision that day - a decision that would determine the course of his life and would result in touching many lives through the songs he's sung in the Lord's service:

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold; I'd rather be His than have riches untold; I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land; I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand:

Refrain: Than to be the king of a vast domain or be held in sin's dread sway!
I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today.

I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause; I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause; I'd rather have Jesus than world-wide fame; I'd rather be true to His holy name:

Saving faith is to trust and to love Jesus with all your heart, truly, deeply, richly

E. Distinct from Full Assurance

1. Saving faith is not the same as absolute assurance
2. A person who is justified through faith in Christ may GROW in their faith; they can also wound their assurance by sinning
3. Jesus called His disciples, "You of little faith"
4. Full assurance is the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, sometimes over years of experiences and study of scripture...
5. One can have saving faith without the full assurance that comes later

III. The Confirmation of Saving Faith

A. Saving Faith Produces Outward Consequences

1. Clearly included in Paul's statement

Romans 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is

with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

2. The core teaching of James 2

James 2:14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?

James 2:17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

The first action true saving faith takes is confessing with the mouth... but that is merely the beginning of a life of publicly confessing the truth your heart has believed: Jesus is Lord, and God raised Him from the dead

3. A faith which remains internal only is not saving faith

4. The consequences of saving faith always produce some motion with the body... speaking, crying, living, moving, acting

5. Let's look at five steps of public confession of Christ, which confirms the inner, secret, hidden, invisible faith

B. Step 1: Confirmed by Confession With the Mouth

1. The word "confess" has a deep significance... it means to testify solemnly, as in a court of law... the most solemn use of words a human can display

Matthew 14:6-7 On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for them and pleased Herod so much ⁷ that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.

2. Literally to "say with"... to say what God the Father does about Jesus

a. We agree with God the Father that Jesus is Lord, and we confess it with our mouths

b. The mouth thus becomes the first window of what is in the heart

c. We speak what we have come to believe with all our hearts

2 Corinthians 4:13 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak

3. The heart believes before the mouth can confess... or else the words are mere hypocrisy

Romans 10:13-14 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?

4. But once the heart believes that Jesus is Lord, the mouth will speak of it... it is inevitable!!

Matthew 12:33-37 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. ³⁶ But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

5. The drive to speak what is burning in our hearts is so strong, we cannot help it

[Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, commanded not to speak or teach at all in the name of Christ] *Acts 4:20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

6. The connection between the heart and the mouth is so strong, Jesus made this verbal confession of Christ an essential proof of saving faith

NASB *Matthew 10:32-33 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven."*

7. Verbal confession of Christ is essential to our salvation... but we were already justified by the hidden faith of our hearts before we spoke a word of it

C. Step 2: Confirmed by Prayer from the Heart

1. Almost every witnessing tract I've ever read culminates in something called "The sinner's prayer"...
2. Four Spiritual Laws: **"Lord Jesus, I need you. I confess to you that I am a sinner. Thank you that you died on the cross for my sins. I ask you now to save me from my sins and take control of my life. Make me the kind of person you want me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen."**

3. Most people know that the words are not magic words

Illus. Voddie Baucham: talking about manipulation in witnessing... "God, that thing you did for Steve that he's been telling me you want to do for me? Now's good!"

"The best thing Steve did for me is he didn't try to change my prayer!"

4. Some people believe this is the moment of salvation

5. They base that on the statement: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."
6. It is a valid thing, for the Lord made people tell Him what they wanted from Him:

[to blind Bartimaeus] *Mark 10:51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."*

7. The thief on the cross verbalized his faith:

Luke 23:42-43 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³ Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

8. However, understand: saving faith PRECEDES any verbal prayer... I contend that by the time the sinner prays and asks God to save him or her, they are already justified by the faith of their heart
9. Faith comes first; God sees the faith and justifies the sinner, THEN out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks the sinner's prayer
10. The sinner's prayer of the heart is merely outward verbal confirmation of an inner faith that God put there
11. This is proved by the next section in Romans 10:

Romans 10:13-14 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?

You can't call on the name of the Lord if you have not first believed... and it is the hidden faith of the heart that justifies...

Romans 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

"Saved" there means that the work begun at justification is CARRIED ON through the confession of the mouth... but it is heart faith that justifies first

D. Step 3: Confirmed by Water Baptism

1. One of the major early steps in a Christian's life is the outward confession of Christ by water baptism
2. By water baptism we are confessing Christ
3. By water baptism, we are confessing ourselves as sinners in need of Christ as our Savior

4. It is a public statement to the world

Illus. A woman was afraid to give her testimony in front of the whole church; she asked, “Do I really need to do this publicly?” I said, “Yes, but God will help you.” It is the nature of water baptism that we are testifying to the watching world that we are Christians

In Japan, a good number of Japanese were willing to say they were Christians, but non-Christian Japanese families didn’t pay any of it much mind until they were baptized

5. Water baptism doesn’t save anybody’s soul, but it is the way God has ordained to confess our faith in Christ to a watching world

6. NOTE: about “walking the aisle”:

- a. In many evangelical churches, there is an invitation to come to Christ at the end of the sermon... people are encouraged to get out of their seats and walk to the front of the church as a public statement of desire to follow Christ
- b. BUT that physical symbol is never commanded in the Bible... rather water baptism is the way Christ wants us to confess our faith in Him publicly...
- c. Revivalism... camp meetings, Second Great Awakening focused totally on human decision
- d. Charles Finney developed the “New Measures”, including the “anxious bench” for sinners under conviction after an evangelistic message
- e. “coming forward” at the end of a revival service became best known in the ministries of Billy Sunday and Billy Graham
- f. “coming forward” is fine if it is helpful; but we should realize it’s a tradition and not a command

E. Step 4: Confirmed by a Transformed Lifestyle

Ron Hamilton: “Your walk talks and your talk talks; but your walk talks louder than your talk talks.”

1. To say with your lips, “Jesus is Lord” and live in sin is hypocrisy
2. We confess that Jesus is Lord by putting sin to death and walking in obedience to His kingly commands
3. Saving faith is best confirmed by a transformed lifestyle in obedience to the leadership of the Holy Spirit

4. Immediate changes come... gross sins fall away; drunks stop drinking, idol worshippers stop worshipping idols; sexually immoral people stop sinning in that way
5. Clearest evidence to the watching world

Romans 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.

1 Thessalonians 1:8-10 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia-- your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, ⁹ for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead-- Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

6. Conversely, nothing denies our confession that Christ is Lord more than disobedience to His commands

Titus 1:16 They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

F. Step 5: Confirmed by Perseverance Through Suffering

1. Key concept to our confession: PERSEVERANCE in the struggle

Matthew 13:20-21 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

2. Type 1: Suffering temptation resulting in holiness OVER YEARS AND YEARS... "fighting the good fight"

1 Timothy 6:12-14 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

3. Type 2: Suffering persecution resulting from confession and evangelism
 - a. God calls on us to testify to His name publicly in this wicked age

- b. He wants us to speak up for Him, to speak the name of Christ in the public arena
- c. He wants us to SPEAK UP for Biblical truths, for the gospel, for righteousness, for the poor and needy
- d. He wants us to be willing to suffer rejection and opposition and persecution for the gospel
- e. This is the confession of our lips: “Jesus is Lord” to a world which is living in rebellion to Him
- f. That will earn us resistance, then mocking, then scorn, then hostility, then persecution, then physical suffering, maybe all the way to death
- g. Confessing Christ in a wicked world is costly... but Christ wants us to speak His name
- h. This very confession men like Nicodemus were originally unwilling to make

John 12:42-43 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

- i. This is always the problem with our public confession... it earns us trouble in this world... suffering
- j. Jesus commands us to be willing to suffer for His name

2 Timothy 1:8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God

[Jesus said] *Mark 8:38 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.*

- k. Our willingness to pay the price to make a public confession that “Jesus is Lord” is essential to the advance of the gospel... how else will people be saved if no one is willing to confess Christ?

2 Timothy 2:8-10 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Colossians 1:24-25 Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. ²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness

4. Understand our times: the name of “Jesus” will become more and more offensive in pluralistic America
 - a. Not many mind if you talk about faith in God
 - b. Not many mind if you say “May God bless you” to a huge crowd
 - c. However, “May Christ be with you” or “May the Lord Jesus Christ bless you” will get you in trouble
 - d. Jesus wants us to speak His name and be willing to pay the price

IV. Applications

- A. Understand the full nature of saving faith
 1. The Content: Certain spiritual facts... Christ’s status as Lord, His resurrection
 2. The Character: Christ has become the treasure of your heart
 3. The Confirmation: Saving faith produces an outcome in the life
- B. Examine yourself to see if you are in the faith
- C. Is Christ your treasure?
- D. Does your life show that He is?
- E. Do you need to be baptized?
- F. Are you confessing Christ publicly?